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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/602,689	06/25/2003	Hirokazu Matsuura	26C-021	1370
23400	7590	08/07/2006	EXAMINER	
POSZ LAW GROUP, PLC 12040 SOUTH LAKES DRIVE SUITE 101 RESTON, VA 20191			DUNN, DAVID R	
		ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER	
			3616	

DATE MAILED: 08/07/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/602,689	MATSUURA ET AL.	
	Examiner David Dunn	Art Unit 3616	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 20 July 2006.
 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 4-9 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) 6 and 7 is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) 4,5 and 8 is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) 9 is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)	4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)	Paper No(s)/Mail Date: _____
3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date: _____	5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
	6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

This Office Action is responsive to the amendment filed July 20, 2006.

Claim Objections

1. Claim 5 is objected to because of the following informalities:

Claim 5 recites “a door portion covering the opening of the case”, however, this recitation has been added to claim 4. The examiner recommends deleting this line from claim 5.

Additionally in the final two lines of claim 5, it appears that “the airbag cover is covered” should be --the gap is covered--; as it appears that the airbag cover covers the gap as shown in Figure 7. If applicant does mean that the “airbag cover is covered” the examiner requests clarification to how the cover is covered.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 4, 5, and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kitagawa (GB 2 263 671 A) in view of Warnez et al. (US 5,904,367).

Kitagawa et al. disclose a knee protecting airbag device arranged below a steering column, comprising: an airbag (26), a case (24, 28) attached to the vehicle for housing the folded airbag, wherein the case has a recessed section at a front side thereof (see Figure 2), the case being arranged directly below the steering column, the case further being arranged apart from the steering column (see Figure 2), the recessed section being arranged substantially at a lateral center of the case to indent a portion of the case near an upper and front-side corner of the case (upper side is indented, along with the lower side); an inflator (25); and an interior decoration member (20) for the vehicle provided separate from the airbag cover wherein the case is arranged at a front side of the vehicle with respect to the interior decoration member (the steering column cover 20 extends rearward from the airbag; see Figure 3). Additionally, it is noted that the steering wheel (12) inherently (i.e., the cover of the steering wheel) has an interior decoration member, and the steering wheel is rearward of the airbag case.

Kitagawa et al. fails to show the cover and the interior decoration member being flush. the door of the airbag covering a gap between the interior decoration member and the airbag.

Warnez et al. discloses a knee protection airbag device arranged in front of the knees of a seat occupant (see Figures 1 and 6), comprising: a case (18); an airbag cover includes an interior side portion (40) with a door portion (20) adapted to open upwardly (see Figure 6); an interior decoration member (10) separate from the airbag cover, wherein the airbag pushes open the door portion such that a gap formed between the interior decoration member and an upper side of the airbag cover along the front-rear direction is covered when the airbag is deployed (see Figure 6). As shown in Figure 2, the airbag cover (20) and the interior decoration member (10) are flush and form a continuous surface (see at 88 & 90).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Kitagawa et al. with the teachings of Warnez et al. to provide an improved airbag cover to better cover the interior decoration member of the steering column and to better guide the inflation of the airbag and to provide a flush surface in order to improve the aesthetics of the dashboard.

Allowable Subject Matter

3. Claims 6 and 7 are allowed.
4. Claim 9 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Response to Arguments

5. Applicant's arguments with respect to claim 4 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Conclusion

6. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO

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MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to David Dunn whose telephone number is 571-272-6670. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Fri, 8:30-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Paul Dickson can be reached on 571-272-6669. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.



David Dunn
Primary Examiner